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ABSTRACT

To help primary and elementary school principals in South Carolina, this short manual identifies aspects to be considered when developing a kindergarten program. Part 1 discusses the reasons for having kindergartens, lists the skills to be developed in kindergarten (including motor, personal-social, perceptual, auditory, visual, memory, and problem-solving development), and notes the place of kindergarten in the total school curriculum. Part 2 covers the kindergarten curriculum and the principal's role in relation to it, while part 3 elaborates on the principal's administrative role in the kindergarten program and the principal's interpretation of the program to the school community, parents, and the larger community. In part 4, parent-principal relations are examined more closely and specific activities are suggested to help the principal enhance parents' relationship with the school. Part 5 describes the State plan for kindergarten, including the outcomes desired and general requirements for kindergarten materials, schedules, staff, transportation, enrollment, evaluation, parent communications, food service, and library resources. A brief bibliography of resources is appended. (RW)

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School Begins with Kindergarten

A Resource Book for Principals

South Carolina Department of Education
Cyril B. Busbee, State Superintendent

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SCHOOL BEGINS WITH KINDERGARTEN

A Resource Book for Principals

Contributing Authors

Dr. Millie Cowles
Dr. Oralie McAfee
Christine Branche
Dr. Kevin Swick

Compiled by

Phyllis Ford
Candy Carter
Early Childhood Education Consultants

Joel Taylor, Chief Supervisor
School Services Section

H. G. Hollingsworth, Jr., Director
Office of General Education

Charlie G. Williams, Deputy Superintendent
Division of Instruction

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South Carolina Department of Education

Cyril B. Busbee
State Superintendent of Education

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Foreword

As the kindergarten program has progressed from sixty-seven units in a few participating schools to include most all primary and elementary schools in the state's ninety-two districts, it has continued to grow and change. As this continues to happen, the situations for children and adults will always be different and challenging. It is our responsibility to provide strong, effective programs to meet these new children in these new times.

The philosophy of the state kindergarten program has remained constant during this period of growth and development. As we provide learning opportunities for more children, it is important that all members of the educational team be knowledgeable and informed. It is our endeavor here to identify those aspects which must be considered when developing any given kindergarten program.

An individual program ultimately relies on the strengths of the kindergarten teacher and teacher aide. However, the key to strengthening a program lies with the elementary school principal, the leader of the team. The principal must be knowledgeable of all aspects of the program, including curriculum development.

Kindergarten is the beginning of school. As such, it is an integral part of the total school program. As we continue to provide growth opportunities for the children in our schools, we must also continue to grow professionally to meet this responsibility. This publication is intended to provide information to principals concerning their role and responsibility to the kindergarten program.

Candy Carter
Phyllis Ford

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We would like to offer
a very, very special thank-you
to all of the children
who shared their pictures with us.

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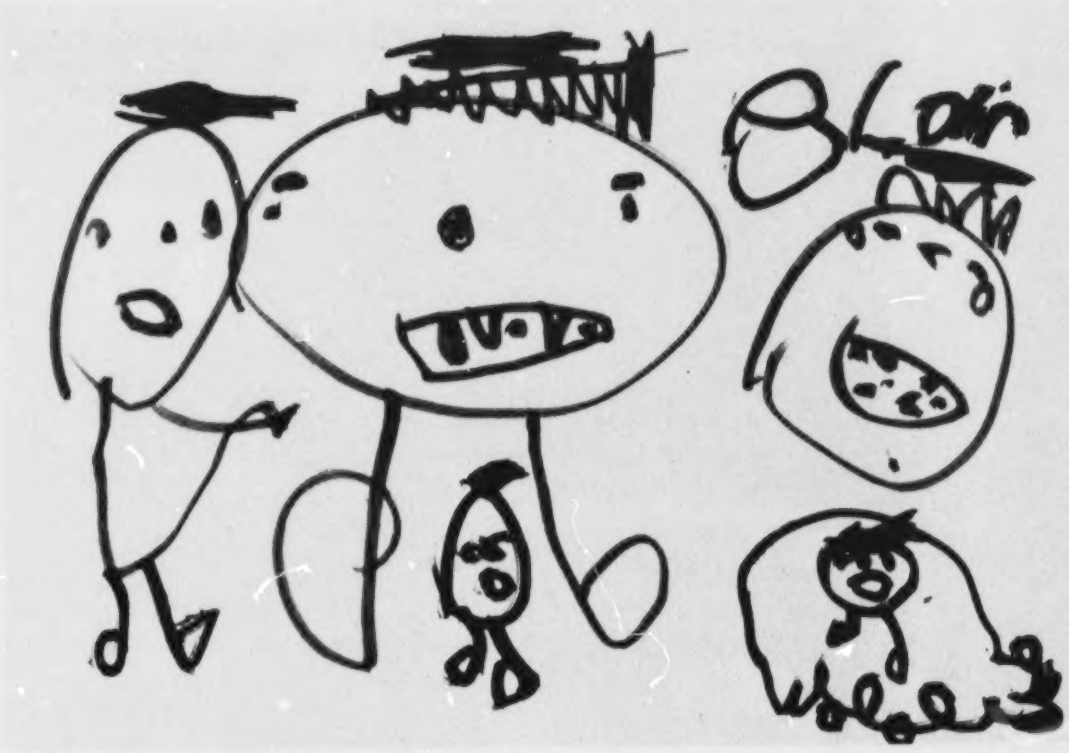

My dad is taking me to school.
This is my dad, brother, mom, and me.

Kindergarten: A Beginning

Milly Cowles
Professor of Early Childhood Education
University of Alabama in Birmingham

Where did kindergarten begin?

The story of the little boy who becomes famous as a man due to a warm, supportive environment that was provided by teachers, parents, or others is often told, and many of us are not immune from getting "lumps" everytime we hear it. Since their beginning, public schools in the United States have had always as their constituents the little boys and girls who have the potential to become "somebodies," and more importantly, the potential for becoming and being worthy in the eyes of themselves. The extreme **potency** of the earliest school years will some day be recognized for what **it is.** Undoubtedly, it is in the foundation period of any human endeavor that roots are laid as a basis for what is to come later. That is, the first "formal" out-of-the-home experience for the child is the most crucial for all later school experiences. For most children in the South, kindergarten is that period; therefore, that first year's curriculum must be established on the most knowledgeable and reasonable bases in order to guarantee each child the most solid and dynamic introduction to the wonders that can be and ought to be associated with all educational endeavors.

In reviewing the history of the development of kindergarten in our country, one finds that kindergartens began as private programs around 1855 in homes. Paralleling the kindergarten movement, in Massachusetts, as early as 1647, every town with at least fifty houses **had** to select a teacher who was to instruct reading and writing. By 1823, primary schools were the only free ones available to all potential pupils, but it is important to note that it was not until 1890 that the first state **required** school attendance. That was less than 100 years ago. The private kindergartens, then, were not the only level of education suffering from a lack of support. Interestingly, the first publicly supported kindergarten began in St. Louis, Missouri, during the superintendency of Dr. William T. Harris, a man ahead of his time. He was champion both for kindergartens **and** public education in the 1870's, long before either had gained much popular support. At the same time, Mrs. Elizabeth Peabody, a Massachusetts philanthropist, was pushing for the recognition of the value of kindergartens in the Boston area. After 1900, kindergartens were a regular part of the elementary school in the Northeast and Midwest, and Dr. Harris', Mrs. Peabody's and others' dreams were realized—but it took more than fifty years. Strangely, and not easily explained, the South lagged far behind in recognizing the value of programs for five-year-olds, and it was not until 1967 that Virginia became the first southern state to provide public monies for kindergarten programs. North and South Carolina both began "pilot" programs in 1969, and since then, other states have gradually phased in some publicly supported units.

Why have kindergartens?

In contemporary times, the rationale for support of programs for young children comes from various diverse sources. Benjamin Bloom[1] critiqued and reviewed all research studies of merit

[1]Benjamin Bloom, *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), pp. 100-175.

conducted over more than a 30-year period that dealt with intelligence and school achievement. His analysis led him to conclude that "approximately 50 percent of general achievement at Grade 12 has been reached by the end of Grade 3." Likewise, in the area of intelligence, he found that approximately 50 percent of the variance associated with intelligence could be accounted for by the time children reach age four. Even more startling, he reported that 80 percent could be accounted for by the time the child reaches age eight. Bloom's work alone would be hard to ignore in pleading the case for sound kindergarten programs, but there is other evidence to add here. Research studies,[2] in which children who attended kindergarten have been compared to those who did not attend, have revealed the following:

Kindergarten attenders showed more interest in words, letters of the alphabet, numbers, being read to, and looking at books and magazines.

Kindergarten attenders are superior in number understanding, language usage, and copying in first grade.

Kindergarten attenders scored higher on reading tests at the end of first grade.

Kindergarten attenders showed better auditory discrimination, had faster rates of learning and superior motor coordination in first grade.

Kindergarten attenders had more satisfactory social adjustment in relation to peers and more satisfactory adjustment to school in the first three grades.

Kindergarten attenders showed better social attitudes, health habits, play behavior, and game participation in the first grade. They also performed better in reading, music, social science, language, and arithmetic.

Kindergarten attenders were superior at the beginning of first grade in reading achievement.

Kindergarten attenders' parents reflected a higher quality of "parent-school relationships."

There is, then, a realistic basis for the support of early education, and the same general curriculum principles guide the development of high quality programs in early childhood programs as in elementary or secondary ones.

The three basic considerations at all levels of schooling are the child, the society, and organized knowledge and skills. The society supports the school; therefore, its values and goals are upheld in most formal school curriculum plans, and the implementation of such plans attempts to reflect the best side of the social order. Obviously, children go to school to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to make them fully functioning self-realizers who will contribute to the betterment of the general culture. And that is the primary objective of all schooling. Since it is the child who goes to school and is the learner, his developmental patterns, in totality, have to be considered as the major source for curriculum planning.

Usually there is not much argument among educators that the three components—the child, the society, and organized knowledge and skills—are the primary factors in curriculum building considerations. Rather, the disagreements arise when the theoretical considerations have to be translated into day-to-day practice.

What is taught in kindergarten?

Kindergarten ought not be a year in which the first-grade program is extended downward. Instead, a quality package should be provided for the developmental level of the five-year-old child. The environment both indoors and out-of-doors should be designed to enhance the development of

[2]Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, "Research Findings," in *Early Childhood Education: A Case for the Kindergarten* (Atlanta: 1969), pp. 4-5.

the child. A constant vigil must be maintained to ensure that the activities "match" the child, that they are neither too "easy" nor too "hard." Only through a feeling of mastery, or "I can do," does the child grow in his inner feelings of competency. For example, when formalized-standardized reading and writing programs are introduced across the board to all kindergarten children, we may be introducing undue frustration and a grand opportunity for the child to see school as a place in which he does not fit. As those feelings grow, only more frustration and failure experiences follow.[3]

Kindergarten programs that follow research findings and expert opinion generally have learning environments planned from which varied activities facilitate the following vital areas in the child's development:

Gross Motor Development: Activities such as balancing on one foot, hopping, skipping, throwing large and small balls, and catching objects are examples here. This area is vital to achieving an internal balance that facilitates fine motor development which is essential to reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Fine Motor Development: This area follows the child's being skilled in large muscle development. Activities, in which children copy simple designs such as circles, rectangles, and squares and learn to differentiate them, and in which they can draw a person with at least six or more body parts, are vital to readiness for the eye-hand coordination needed for writing, reading, and arithmetic.

Personal-Social Development: Activities that help the child develop a sense of exerting control over and being a part of his environment are vital to his having the psychological energy to learn. Although simple to adults, such exercises as washing and drying hands, helping with housekeeping, using eating utensils, b[illegible]oning, using the toilet independently, separating from the mother or primary caretaker, playing interactively with others, caring for personal things, and talking with other children and adults are important to being able to settle into school life.

Language Development: Activities that develop the ability to describe past and present events in complete sentences are the building blocks for all later school work and are absolutely essential. Such items as pointing to and naming body parts, following simple one-step directions, knowing first and last name, recognizing and describing the environment in terms of color, shape, and size, and conversing in sentences are examples of language skills that can be developed in kindergarten.

Auditory-Perceptual Development: This area of development is crucial before any formal study of sounds can be introduced to the child. Activities that facilitate this development are identifying gross sounds such as school bells, clapping and stomping, and less gross sounds such as cutting, tapping and loud

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[3]Some few children are developmentally (socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually) ready to read and write in kindergarten. Likewise, some first-grade children are ready to read and write, but even many first-grade children are not adept enough to handle what we place before them. It seems too bad that we use age to determine exactly when all children should do the same "things." Adults would probably not allow that kind of expectation to be placed on them. Unfortunately, children have to abide by our decisions. Chronological age assumes the greatest importance only at the beginning of schooling and in old age (e.g., mandatory retirement). Many experts in human development have stated that age by itself is the poorest criterion to use as a guide to development.

whispers, and telling the location of sounds. Identifying rhyming words in familiar and then unfamiliar contexts, making up rhyming words, recognizing the same word repeated in a series, drawing sounds, and picking out spoken words that begin or end alike are other examples.

Auditory-Memory Development: This aspect of development is essential for many reading and writing skills and for just plain living skills. Examples of activities are imitating sounds (i.e., clock, train), reproducing sounds in various rhythmic patterns, following oral directions as in such games as *Simon Says*, retelling, in sequence, a story or an event, doing choral reading, and singing.

Visual-Perceptual Development: Without adequate development here, it is impossible to observe, classify, and make sense of the world, much less ever learn the basic skills. Activities such as observing and discussing differences in environmental objects, finding differences and likenesses in pictures, arranging forms in matched or directed sequences, connecting label words with objects (such as the sign "chair" with a chair), and tracing, coloring, and cutting evenly facilitate growth in visual-perceptual development.

Visual-Memory Development: Here we find a skill that is also vital for all later school work. Activities that help with growth are naming familiar but out-of-sight objects looked at on another occasion, naming from recall a series of no more than three to five objects viewed and then covered, identifying missing objects from a series, reproducing a series of pictures viewed and then scrambled, and filling in parts of an incomplete picture.

Problem-Solving Development: The areas of development mentioned above are all components that are necessary for the development of problem-solving. Careful observation of children for forty years by Jean Piaget and others has guided our thinking in education to the startling conclusion that children learn more from **each other** than from adults, and that their social interactions with each other are crucial for social, emotional, and intellectual development. We know that children's ability to think is governed entirely by what they have seen, experienced, and produced. They **can not** and **do not** think as adults and should not be expected to do so. The child's reasoning must be accepted as it is. Their thinking and reasoning are perceptually bound. To develop problem-solving abilities, children need to be guided to observe and predict, and there must be a broad array of activities in which they actively and personally take things apart, put them back together, and see, for example, how wheels roll, what pulleys and levers do, and have the opportunity every day to dabble in making something that is **designed** and created by them. That is why unit blocks, "messing around learning centers," music, and art are so vital to intellectual growth.

As a result of research studies, we know that 10 to 40 percent of all kindergarten "graduates" need more developmental activities in first grade and beyond. In a good setting, kindergarten is

valuable, but no one can force real human development. Actually, the child's developmental level ought to be assessed carefully by the teacher, and then his instructional program should be tailored to allow him to experience success and positive growth. This is not to say that it is ever wise to wait until any given child is ready for an activity. We might, in that case, wait forever. Rather, if a child needs to reach a higher plateau in any skill area, then specific activities (that are aimed toward developing those skills) should be planned for the child. The educational program should be carefully designed and monitored to match the functioning level of the child. Following that kind of curriculum implementation, the child receives instruction at a level that is commensurate with where he is—not where someone wishes he were or where someone thinks he ought to be.

How is kindergarten an integral part of the total school curriculum?

If curriculum programs are planned for children, then the primary curriculum would be meshed with the kindergarten curriculum. The first year of the primary curriculum sequence should be planned to begin where the child is. The base fact is that, unless an activity for any human of any age is geared to the comprehension level of the learner, it is virtually worthless. We would like to make the following final recommendations[4] that could possibly improve both kindergarten and primary programs:

1. Strengthen public education through the extension of an early childhood organizational structure that includes pre-primary and primary education.

2. Prepare administrators specifically for early childhood education and have their activities coordinated.

3. Use all theoretical, foundational, and historical knowledge available rather than being bound to one particular theory.

4. Work to eliminate continuity and articulation problems as children progress from one organizational level to another.

5. Develop esthetically pleasing in- and out-of-door spaces that are designed to meet all developmental needs of children.

6. Develop curriculum sequences that range from simple to concrete to complex and that involve self-selection of activities by learners within the framework of individualization.

7. Provide differentiated staffing patterns that include men and women, professionals and paraprofessionals within the context of adequate numbers of such personnel.

8. Plan and implement continuous teacher training.

9. Involve parents in such a way that rights and responsibilities of both parents and professionals are protected and enhanced.

10. Develop reasonable, developmental goals for the early childhood years and then tailor them to each child.

11. Develop evaluation that is formative, summative, and longitudinal.

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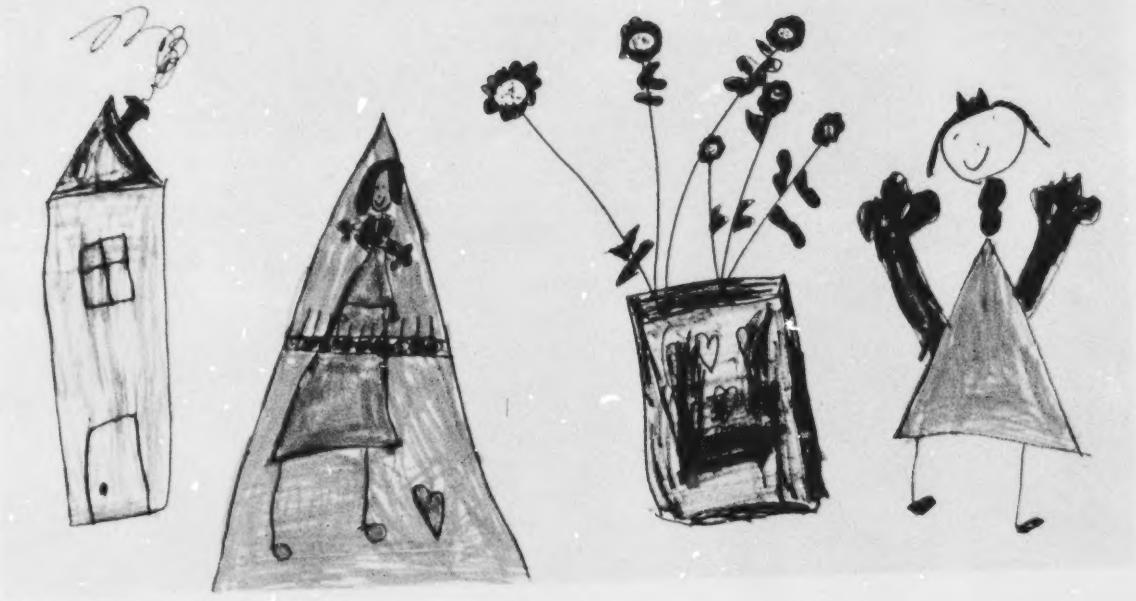
[4]Milly Cowles, "Education for the Young Child," in *School of the Future Now* (Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1972), pp. 17-26.

Darlene Tuyay



This is the housekeeping center.
This is me at the easel.
I like to go to the science center and look at the flowers.
This is my good friend I like to play with.

The Kindergarten Curriculum

Oralie McAfee
Assistant Profesor of Education
Metropolitan State College
Denver, Colorado

What do children learn in kindergarten?

They learn about themselves—that they are growing and learning, that they can assume and fulfill responsibility in the school situation. They learn who they are in relation to their teacher, their classmates, and other adults in the school. Most of all, they begin to learn to feel good about their capabilities in school and in relation to school learning.

They learn about school and school behaviors. For many children, kindergarten is their first extended experience away from home and their first experience in a group of children their own age. In kindergarten, young children gradually learn how to work in a group, to follow directions, when to talk and when not to talk, the teacher-pupil relationship, and other behaviors specific to school.

They learn about the society we live in, the customs, festivities, musical and literary heritage, and all the other traditions we share. Because we are such a diverse people, they learn about other children's customs and festivities as well, and the beginning of mutual respect.

They learn to express themselves—through music, speaking, painting and drawing, dancing, and modeling, as well as through the beginning skills of writing and reading.

They learn the foundations of the basic subject matter they will be studying and refining the rest of their years in school. Science, math, literature, reading, writing, social studies, the fine arts—in fact, all the disciplines are taught in kindergarten at a level appropriate to a five-year-old.

How do they learn in kindergarten?

They learn through working with materials—puzzles, paint, paper, blocks, Cuisenaire rods, scales, water, sand, books, and all the many other kinds of materials that are available for the children to explore, put together, take apart, experiment with, discuss, and write about. Five-year-olds are active explorers, and the kindergarten teacher takes advantage of this characteristic to help them learn.

Kindergartners learn through direct instruction. Exactly what the teacher teaches is best determined by assessment of the children's abilities in relation to the goals of the program; but basic concepts of time, space, number, shape, relationships, and other specifics are covered, including many of the "academic" skills they will be expected to know in first grade.

They learn by looking, listening, tasting, touching, and smelling. These sensory experiences form the bases of the concepts and ideas they learn, refine, modify, and expand throughout the year.

They learn through social interaction with the adults—including the principal—and other children in the school. Talking, playing, working, eating, singing, planning, and evaluating together gives kindergartners the opportunity to test their own ideas against someone else's, to see how others go about doing things, and to learn how to function in small and large groups, where many people's needs and preferences must be considered.

They learn from their own attempts to organize and make sense out of their experiences, as well as from what we tell and show them. They learn at different rates, just as they grow at different rates. Some may enter kindergarten reading; others will need the many foundation experiences of kindergarten before they are ready to read in first grade. Some will be well coordinated, with their motor and perceptual abilities fully integrated and ready for the fine eye and hand work of reading and writing. Others will need many general and specific perceptual-motor skills developed as a part of their kindergarten curriculum.

How does the kindergarten curriculum relate to later learning?

The foundations of reading, writing, arithmetic, and other school-related learnings are laid in kindergarten. Children leave kindergarten at different points in their learning. They will not all have mastered the same learnings, any more than all eighth graders or seniors will know the same things. The first grade teacher will pick up on and build upon the knowledge and skills the child exhibits. Continuity through kindergarten, first grade, and second grade is achieved, not by allocating parts of the first grade curriculum to kindergarten, but by careful assessment of individual children's development, learning, and skills, and planning a program appropriate to those. Teachers who meet together, plan together, and understand each other's goals will be more likely to achieve continuity and articulation from kindergarten through first grade.

What about reading?

Kindergarten children's reading experiences should be an integral part of a broad-based language arts program that includes listening, speaking, and writing—with greater emphasis on oral language than on written. Children should be fluent in oral language, and should have a broad range of developmentally appropriate experiences in pre-reading skills and attitudes before the systematic teaching of reading. Lack of these prerequisites, which are more basic than the "basics," may plague the child forever.

What is the principal's role in relation to the kindergarten curriculum?

The principal lends support to the total program in a number of ways. Perhaps the most important of these is in understanding the goals and methods of the kindergarten. The pressure to make kindergarten a junior editon of first grade has probably been there since kindergarten first began, and is unlikely to go away. The principal's support and encouragement will enable the kindergarten teacher to plan and develop a program for these young children that corresponds to what current knowledge and established practice indicate is best. Know the goals of the program and how the teacher plans to achieve those goals. Visit, participate in some of the activities, and share the joy of the children as they learn and develop in this supportive environment. Understand and support the unique needs of the children for necessary materials and equipment to work with. These are not "toys" but the "stuff" of learning for five-year-olds. Help the school consider the needs and limitations of their youngest pupils when scheduling music, art, or other special resources. Special activities and resources need to be spread throughout the week and year, so that children have time to anticipate and enjoy each experience as well as integrate them with their other learnings. The kindergarten may need some special consideration in other school activities as well—sharing the playground, cafeteria, school assemblies, and so forth.

The principal supports teachers in their many roles in the kindergarten—particularly in planning and developing an individualized program. Because the kindergarten program cannot rely on books, workbooks, worksheets, and written instructions to the children, it must be carefully organized and planned by the teacher. This takes time—time to consult with parents and aides, to

assess children's learning and keep track of their progress, to secure and make ready the necessary materials for learning, to review the day and each child's activities in preparation for tomorrow. Guides for doing all this are scanty, and teachers need rich personal and professional resources to draw on. In-service training, visitation days, and other opportunities for professional growth will help the teacher plan fresh and vital experiences for the children. Many professional and commercial magazines for teachers have special sections for teachers of young children. By subscribing to these for the school, the resources are then readily available to the kindergarten teacher, and to others.

The principal supports continuity through kindergarten and the primary grades that follow. Teachers, who meet, exchange ideas and information, discuss records, problems and solutions, air differences in behavioral and knowledge expectations of the children, can lessen the gap between kindergarten and the primary grades. The kindergarten and first grade teachers can enhance each other's efforts, and children's learning—but only if they know and respect the other's efforts.

The principal also supports continuity between home and school. This continuity is important not only for general support, but also in relation to the kindergarten curriculum. Make sure teachers and parents get together in the spring so that parents will know about the broad goals of the kindergarten program, the learning approaches that will be used, and ways they can help their children get ready. The school's handbook for parents should include some specific guides related to the curriculum. For example, many parents teach their children to print. The school can make available to them a guide of the correct formation of letters and numerals. By knowing in advance that the kindergarten will expect a youngster to be independent, able to make many decisions and choices concerning his or her work, and able to talk in a group of children, parents can encourage these behaviors. Perhaps most important, explanation of the goals of the kindergarten will help parents understand and appreciate the place of the kindergarten curriculum in the education of their children.

The books fell on the floor.
Our principal is helping me to pick up the books.

The Kindergarten and the School Principal

Christine Branche
Director of Early Childhood Education
Cleveland Board of Education

What administrative roles have effect on the kindergarten program?

Young children burst upon the hallowed silence of the schoolhouse with fast feet and excited high voices, eager to be mainstreamed into **real** school. Too often the administrative involvement with this segment of elementary organization is *laissez faire.* It's all so simplistic: friendly teacher, plus an attractive room, plus safe happy children equals a good program. "Now go along and play!"

If an educationally sound and developmentally appropriate early childhood program is to function with maximum effectiveness in this setting, the principal must orchestrate a variety of components far beyond show-and-tell, beginning with his/her own attitudes about early childhood programs. This may require some renovation.

A personal professional review of available resources may be in order to establish a climate and point of reference. What manner of creature is a four- or five-year-old? What is the normal expectation for growth and development at this stage? What are the developmental needs that must be addressed? What are reasonable and appropriate expectations? What is an appropriate adult/child ratio? Think through this group profile, and hopefully, it will become clear that these classes are not in a holding pattern, but are, in fact, the foundation for the entire elementary program. As they play, children are learning to **learn,** setting into motion personal styles and standards, and interacting in a planned environment which implements appropriate basic curriculum. This is what early childhood education is all about.

Next comes a thorough review of state and local requirements which must be met. Usually these are non-negotiable and may dictate the framework into which early childhood must fit. Be aware of local constraints as to time, funds, transportation, and safety, as well as program elements that are operative, such as package programs or special models which must be implemented.

Cultural mores, child rearing practices, and religious considerations, that are vital parts of the response patterns of children and families as they interact with the collective school environment, need to be mutually understood by principal and classroom staff.

Even where the building administrator has had experience with programs for young children, it is helpful to survey the area for available resources or expertise and assistance. Local early childhood specialists, state department personnel, and college and university education departments can be very helpful in staff development and in-service. Determine how services may be secured and what linkage is possible, not only for these programs but for the other grades and subject areas as well. Identify professional organizations and early childhood journals geared specifically to this discipline. (It would be helpful for every elementary school to have a subscription to *Young Children* and to the "ERIC Newsletter.") Encourage staff to belong, to participate, to read, and to be current and informed as professionals. Indeed, there is no limit to the expertise any principal can have to cover all areas. "It is a wise person who knows what he does not know—and a successful one who knows where to find someone who does know." Get some help when it is needed!

How does the principal interpret the kindergarten program to the school community?

One of the most valuable services the principal can provide is to make it clear that the early childhood classes/programs are a part of the school. Early childhood staff should be included in all committees, tasks, meetings, and activities involving building faculty. The children should be included in all school programs and activities where appropriate; talk with the teacher to determine appropriateness. Bulletin boards, auditorium programs, and other routine activities assigned to other classes should apply to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten groups as well. The entire unit must be a participatory part of normal school functioning.

It is often difficult to convey the fact that the play-activity observed in these classrooms is purposeful and meaningful. A "show-and-tell" session at a faculty meeting is usually helpful. The early childhood staff explains what they do, giving the how and why as a foundation for later learning. It is a revelation to the sixth grade science teacher to discover that block building involves elementary physics and geometry, and that the sand table teaches Piagetian conservation theory. The first grade teachers will need interpretation not only of program elements, but also of tests administered and profiles submitted. Some definitive explanation is also needed for **why** the youngsters are so active, even though it is developmentally sound. Encourage a generous sharing of **materials** and **information** between early childhood and primary teachers throughout the year. A visit to the kindergarten classroom by the first grade teacher near the end of the year should prove beneficial. Likewise, the kindergarten teacher should profit from a visit to the first grade during the first weeks of school to see how her former charges are faring. Continuity and transition into the primary grades are too often non-existent. Communication is the "key-word." It may even lead to behavioral changes among professional staff.

The custodian will need a little in-service to tolerate the variety of materials and "mess" used in the classrooms. A standard theme across the nation for teachers of young children is, "Make friends with the custodian, first!! The principal already understands." A clear delineation of housekeeping responsibilities will eliminate misunderstanding.

In addition, food service staff should be helped to recognize the functional and physical limitations of the very young. Wiggling, chattering, exploring, and spilling is in the nature of kindergartners. Their limited muscular control will require some assistance in the mechanics of meal time, yet this age child enjoys "helping" others. Accidents will happen and should not become "moments of terror." Most problems can, however, be eliminated through awareness and planning. The same applies to libraries and media centers, not only in terms of competencies but interests as well. In fact, all ancillary personnel, including volunteers, will profit from a mini-course in *Little Kids* if they are to be effective and comfortable in working with this age group.

How does the principal interpret the kindergarten program to parents and the larger community?

The principal should interpret to parents the philosophy and framework for classroom objectives. It is often difficult to explain why every child is not vigorously pursuing reading by fall open house. The administrator must be able to sell the program with understanding and conviction. Parents must feel a partnership in the education of their children. By a warm acceptance of their presence in the building and in the classroom, the local administrator can begin to build a supportive constituency of volunteers and public relations spokesmen.

What is the key administrative role?

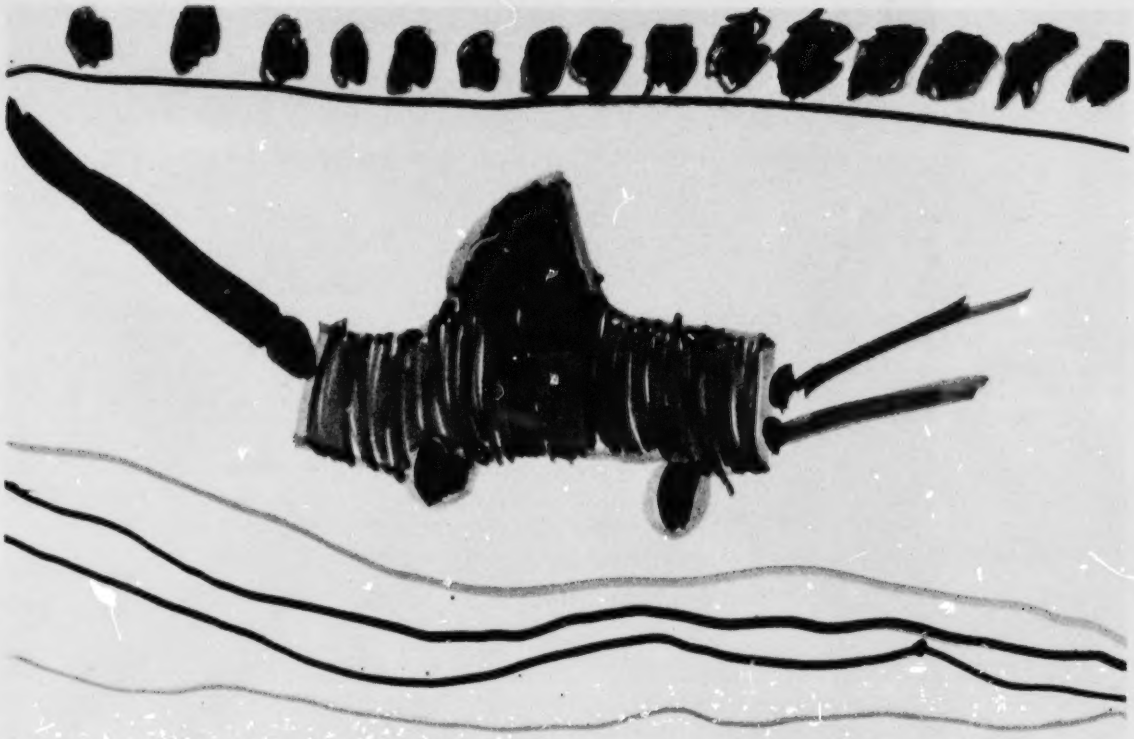
Basically, the administrative role is the same as for every other program and grade in the school. The principal functions as the enabler for everything from graham crackers to parent involvement. This includes allocation of the necessary classroom elements (i.e., appropriate housing, materials, equipment, and supplies). It also includes the mobilizing of expertise and resources to provide identified services for the child to meet all of his needs. Effective utilization of health services, psychologists, speech therapy, curriculum specialists, and social services necessitates

consistent monitoring. The principal thus becomes the team leader on behalf of the children. Early identification of learning inhibitors is a valuable objective for early childhood programs but requires a total team effort to be effective. Plans for remediation require creative approaches with differentiated staff and frequent communication.

As the educational manager, the principal is called upon to provide planning time if early childhood personnel are to function as an effective classroom team. She/he serves as a guide through the line/staff maze to assure progress within (or around) the chain of command. When the principal cannot provide answers, she/he directs the inquiry to another source.

Evaluation also becomes an issue. Not only are informal conferences needed around children and program, but systematic evaluation is also necessary to discuss and review program strategies on a regular basis. Open communication will encourage effective feedback and facilitate positive and unified action.

Realistically, the principal as the educational leader must serve all staff, but particularly early childhood staff, in a sensitive, helpful manner. A building administrator enables a staff to do their job well in a professional environment of mutual concern and support. One additional ingredient which can ease the anxiety levels of all concerned is a good sense of humor. Young children are natural comedians, providing humorous morsels daily. Principals and staff would do well to treasure these moments of laughter. Life and academic pursuit grows far too grim. . . .too soon!



My momma drives me to school.

The Principal– The Leader in Involving Parents

Kevin J. Swick
Associate Professor for Early Childhood Education
University of South Carolina

Why involve the home with the school?

In a very real sense, parents are the formulators of the first curriculum the child experiences. The way parents relate to the child, the kind of nutrition and daily living patterns established in the home, and the modes of communication used to initiate the learning process for the child are all parts of a total living curriculum in which the child forms a life style. Thus, it is imperative that parents be skilled to develop a productive home learning setting. Current efforts to make education programs available to parents, as well as the development of family management and parenting courses in junior high, middle schools and high schools, are encouraging signs that educators as well as other citizens desire to enhance the development of secure and useful home environments.

How can the school begin to form a partnership with parents?

As parents and teachers form home-school relationships, they usually find that each one is able to enhance the other's role in the teaching-learning process. Through a home-school partnership, parents can better see how they relate to the child's education, teachers can gain a better understanding of the homes from which students come, and children can acquire a perspective that parents and teachers are working together in cooperative ways.

What happens when the principal values parents?

The school principal provides the leadership needed to bring together the resources for optimum learning to occur in the classroom. Parents are, of course, key people in helping educators unlock the doors of learning for young children. When school principals value parents, parents learn to value the school and take an active interest in their children's education and in how they can help the school. Children acquire respect for the school and perform in more positive ways within the home and school environments.

By becoming involved with parents and learning about the various backgrounds and needs of parents, school principals are exhibiting their desire to reach the families that comprise the school population. Principals can become knowledgeable about the families in their school through participation on neighborhood councils, continuous contact with parents, working with community service agencies, and other personal visits with parents in neighborhood meetings. As parents and school principals come to know each other, they will develop an appreciation of each other's roles in bringing about a constructive home-school relationship.

In the same respect, when principals value parents, classroom teachers become more open to involving parents in classroom functions and communicate more effectively with the children, parents, and the principal about what is taking place in the classroom. And, when home and school are working together in productive ways, citizens in the community usually become more supportive of education.

How can the principal set the stage for developing a home-school partnership?

There are various ways school principals can set the stage for establishing home-school partnerships. For examples, some leadership tasks principals can implement include initiating programs that involve parents in the education of their children, encouraging teachers to become skilled in working with parents, knowing the parents in their school, caring about the families in their community, responding to parent inquiries, and keeping citizens informed of what is happening in the school.

In a facilitative capacity, principals can establish an environment in which parent-teacher involvement flourishes. When school principals make available needed resources, provide teachers and parents with in-service education programs about parent involvement, and establish a place in the school for parents and teachers to work together, they are taking the needed steps for bringing the home and school closer together. Likewise, when principals work toward improving their own parent-involvement skills, they are providing a positive model for the teachers in the school. As educational leaders, principals can also function as coordinators of schoolwide parent involvement activities. By maintaining continuous communications with parents and teachers about school events and by forming parent advisory councils, school principals can establish continuity between the home and school. In essence, the school principal is the key person in leading, facilitating, and coordinating the home-school team.

What are some specific things principals can do to enhance the home-school relationship?

Involving parents in the educational process can be accomplished in many ways. The school principal, being in the position of providing the needed impetus and direction, can make it happen by drawing upon the many existing resources in the school and community. The diversity of family situations, contemporary work schedules, and variations in student learning styles, as well as the myriad of different school situations, requires the use of many approaches to involving parents and citizens in the school program.

Providing for Parent Education

The school principal is in a unique position to initiate and help implement various types of parent education/information programs. The principal has contact with parents, teachers, and citizens involved in the schooling process. Through such contacts, the principal can see the needs of parents and, in concert with teachers and communitywide family assistance agencies, begin to plan and implement educational programs of value to the parents. Programs related to the way infants and toddlers develop and learn, as well as programs designed to enable parents to understand how they can reinforce what their children learn at school through home learning activities, are invaluable to both parents and school staff.

Keeping Parents Informed

Effective communication is the key to establishing productive home-school relationships. A basic ingredient of any school program must be some regular method of home-school communications. This might be in the form of a newsletter, conference, open house, or home visits. A beginning of the school year orientation program for parents can be the start of a productive communications process between the home and school. Such an orientation should be designed to provide parents with specific information about scheduled events, curriculum plans, student behavior codes, and other material of concern to parents. As a supplement to the orientation program, it can be useful to provide parents with a copy of the school handbook for their use throughout the year. Having established a basis for communications with the home, the principal can continue working with parents in a productive manner.

Another mode of communication is for principals to make themselves available for parent inquiries. A monthly "your principal listens" session, held in the school or civic center, can be an effective way of maintaining positive communications with parents and citizens. The principal can also enable each teacher to maintain communications with parents by providing time and space for individual and/or group conferences on a regular basis or as the need exists. The use of television, newspapers, and other public media can also be helpful to the school principal as means of keeping parents and the community-at-large informed about school happenings.

Utilizing Parents as Volunteers

A critical need in most schools, as principals can verify, is the need for more people to work with young children. The need for more attention to the individual needs of each child has also necessitated a need for more helping hands at school. Some parents can and will become valuable resource people in performing tutorial tasks, clerical duties, program development, supervisory tasks and other jobs of value to them and the school. **Well organized** parent volunteer programs have proven useful in providing children with more individualized learning opportunities, as well as in helping teachers do a better job of teaching.

Involving Parents Through a Parent Place

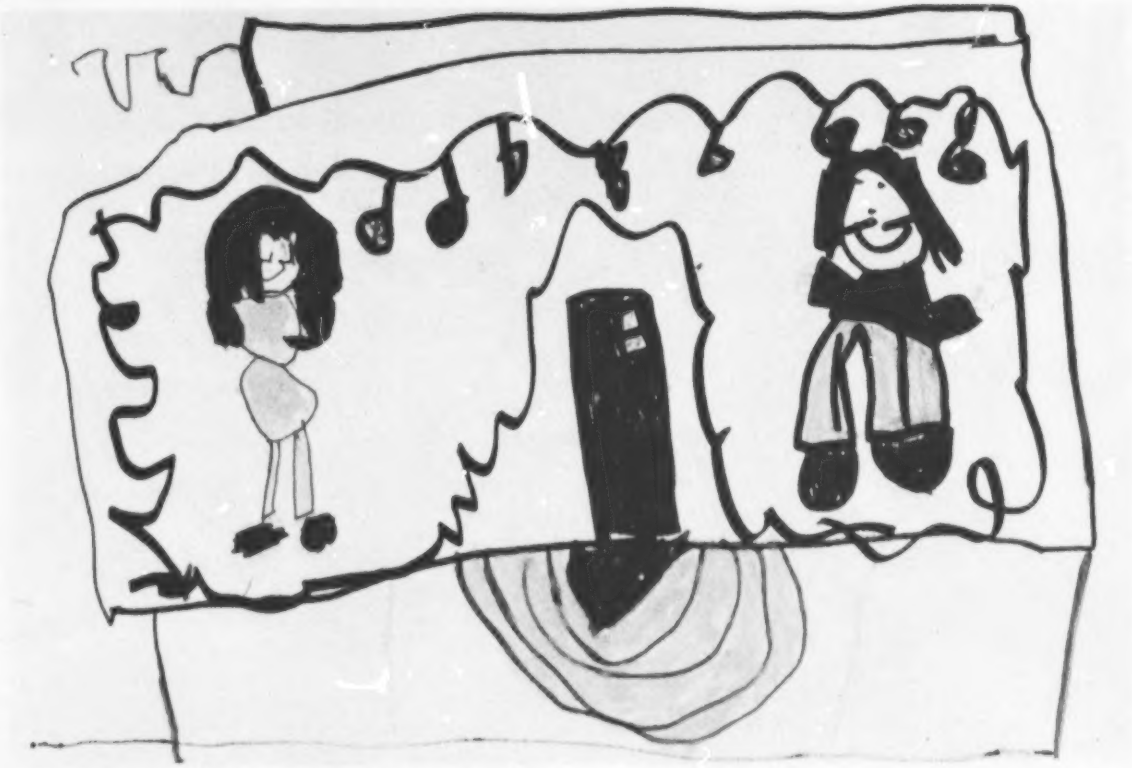
The principal and the school staff can develop a continuing basis for involving parents by providing a place for them to work on school projects, share ideas of importance to them and the school, conduct parent and adult education programs, develop citizen awareness materials on school events, and meet with teachers and other school personnel for individual conferences. When parents have their own place in the school, they are more likely to feel a part of the immediate school community. Within a "parents' room" could exist a home-lending library including materials of interest to parents and children. Such a room could also serve as the central location of the school's parent-teacher organization. Once the space is provided, the parent place should be organized and operated by the parents, and they should have priority in utilizing it through responsibility for scheduling its use. When school principals and teachers establish a place for parents, they are saying, "welcome to our school; you are very important to us and your children, and your place is here as we work together!"

Supporting Teachers Who Value Parents

Educational practitioners as well as researchers continually point to the teacher as the key person in implementing classroom instructional programs. Indeed, teachers are vital parts of any successful program, especially as it relates to involving parents in the educational process. The effective principal recognizes the importance of teachers valuing parents and is highly supportive of their efforts. Principals can support teachers who are actively involving parents in their classroom by lauding their efforts and by providing support through the acquisition of needed resources, providing time for such teachers to do the additional work, and, where possible, by participating in home-school programs as the teachers and parents so desire. Classroom teachers who realize they are being supported and encouraged to involve parents will be more comfortable and active in developing such programs.

Reaching Out to Parents: There Are Many Ways

There are many ways to involve all parents and to reach parents who have usually felt uncomfortable in the school setting, first as a student and then, in turn, as a parent. The school principal can, in these and other instances, reach out to let all parents know it is their school. By visiting with neighborhood councils, making door-to-door visits, greeting parents at the school door, telephoning parents who may not have received information, and responding constructively to parent inquiries, the school principal can, over an extended period of time, develop a feeling among parents of all backgrounds and beliefs that it is their school and that they are needed and wanted in the school.



I like to go to the house center and pretend I'm cooking.
This is the mother and the father.

My mother is going to read me a story.
In bed.

A Schoolwide Parent-Teacher Organization

Every home-school partnership can benefit by having some systematic way of carrying out their functions. By establishing and participating in a parent-teacher organization, the principal can set the stage for developing a **continuous** program of parental involvement. Parent-teacher groups can accomplish many tasks ranging from the offering of social activities to conducting school improvement programs. Local parent-teacher groups have provided many schools with the needed support to improve the quality of education they offer to children. At the state and national levels, parent-teacher associations have led the way toward confronting problems such as child abuse/neglect and the programming of violence on television. School principals have provided leadership and should continue to be leaders in helping the home and school formalize their partnership in a meaningful way.

How can principals involve the entire community in school programs?

Too often citizens view the school as a place where only children can study and learn. The school principal can change this attitude by providing a setting in which parents and citizens are involved in a continuing way. When citizens are involved in activities such as the following, they are more cognizant of the role education plays in every person's life.

1. Adult education programs where citizens can enhance and further develop their job skills and/or personal interests.

2. Preschool programs where infants and toddlers can experience a safe and useful learning situation.

3. Citizen advisory councils used to provide the school with continuing feedback on concerns of the people living in the community.

Every community has some human and material resources that are of direct importance to enhancing the home-school partnership. Principals can extend their grasp of the community through the use of available social service programs, health and dental services and family support programs. By being a part of these community groups, the principal can extend the influence of schooling to assist families in achieving maximum use of resources designed for their use. In addition, use of community businesses, government and related resources can enable school leaders to expand curriculum experiences for children and adults.

The community is a learning laboratory, sounding board, and the place where educated people come together to contribute their skills to the benefit of other people. Schools, under the guidance of school principals and classroom teachers, should involve children in the community through a variety of field trips, service experiences, and exposure to citizens who make the community a reality.

Summary

Children need productive and caring adults who can help them find their lives meaningful and worthwhile to others. Because homes and schools are the primary places in which children spend their time, making them into effective places for children to develop and learn is the job of every citizen. Parents and teachers, as leaders who come into contact with children everyday, can develop skills and behaviors for helping children become the kind of people we want in charge of our society in the future. School principals play a major role in providing leadership in bringing together parents and teachers for the purpose of making the early childhood years a fruitful and beneficial experience for their children.

Our principal helping me to get up after I fell.

What Do We Believe? State Plan for Kindergarten

Phyllis Ford
Candy Carter
Early Childhood Education Consultants
South Carolina Department of Education

The South Carolina kindergarten program focuses on the child: it stresses the value of the individual and reflects the commitment to a discovery approach to learning. The philosophy emphasizes the importance of the interrelationship of all facets of each child's development: social, psychomotor, and intellectual aspects are clearly interwoven. The *Defined Minimum Program* specifically states: "This program shall recognize individuals as socially sensitive personalities with varying abilities and limitations. . .Organizational patterns and teaching methods selected should be flexible and varied in order to develop a personalized program for each child and encourage explorative learning. . . ."

An effective program (1) provides the child with choices, (2) allows the child to arrive at solutions through play, and through the exploration of materials and ideas at his own rate and in his own style, (3) provides the child with a source of information, and (4) provides the child positive support. The outcomes of such a program should be:

1. a child who has a positive self-concept.
2. a child who is healthy and physically coordinated.
3. a child who is beginning to deal appropriately with other children, adults, and his emotions.
4. a child who expands his concepts about the world.
5. a child who can use language to communicate with others.
6. a child who is creative and expresses himself in many ways.
7. a child who is curious and wants to learn.

Those persons most directly involved in early childhood education—the teachers, teacher aides, principals, and parents—have the ultimate responsibility for providing strong programs that will contribute toward the attainment of the above-stated goals. Careful planning at every level is vital to the success of any program for young children. Teachers must take account of several factors when developing an effective program for young children. First of all, the children, their needs, abilities, and interests must be considered in planning. For activities and experiences to be most meaningful, they must be centered around the learner rather than embracing any particular concept. When the needs of individual children give direction to in-depth planning, the curriculum is then equivalent to the total day of learning; all activities that the child experiences provide potential avenues for the development of new concepts. Skillful teachers weave important concept development into an integrated and continuous day of learning.

Another important consideration in program development is the school organization and administration. Support must exist for an activity-centered program that provides concrete experiences from which concepts and skills, that are basic to future learnings, develop. For a more detailed description of program development, please refer to the resource guide, *Early Childhood Education in South Carolina.*

What are the state regulations regarding public school kindergarten?

Kindergartens have not been mandated; however, the 1977 Finance Act insures that kindergarten is a part of the system for free and public education. It also insures that funds will continue to be available for providing state aid for the teacher's salary, adequate and appropriate materials and equipment, transportation costs, and building fund credit.

Initial legislation required that the kindergarten program be established on a double-session basis with one teacher and one aide serving two classes each day. By combining funds, some districts have been able to extend some classes to full-day sessions. The 1977 Finance Act will allow more flexibility in providing early childhood education programs.

At this time, there is no compulsory attendance law that applies to children of kindergarten age. However, recommendations have been made to amend the South Carolina School Code to include the public school kindergarten as a permanent integral part of the public school system.

What are the state requirements concerning program development?

Space

Planning the learning environment and the program which is developed, is based upon sound knowledge of how children learn. An environment can be stimulating and challenging and yet be comfortable for children to work in. It can be orderly and yet not deprive children of using materials freely and independently. Space and materials are arranged carefully to allow children the opportunity of working on a variety of tasks without a great deal of adult direction or assistance.

Kindergarten classroom space should meet the recommendations regarding minimum floor area wherever possible. The amount of classroom space available should be a factor in determining the number of children to be enrolled per class.

Inside:	35 sq. ft. per child is recommended (1,050 sq. ft. minimum; 1,200 sq. ft. recommended)
Outside:	2,750 sq. ft. per one unit minimum 4,300 sq. ft. per two units minimum Add 1,300 sq. ft. for each over two

Please refer to the *Kindergarten Facilities Guidebook* for additional information and space specifications.

Materials and Equipment

In order to develop an environment conducive to learning, it is necessary to have an adequate supply of necessary materials and equipment. An inventory of the materials and equipment for each unit should be maintained and the condition of these recorded yearly. A list of suggested materials and equipment is available from the Department of Education. In addition, the early childhood education consultants of the Office of General Education will provide assistance to those persons responsible for ordering equipment and materials.

Time

The daily schedule within which the program operates must be flexible in order to provide time for children to work at **different levels** for **different periods of time** at **different activities.** A

minimum of two and one half hours for classroom experiences, indoor and outdoor, must exist where a program operates on a double-session plan; this time must be exclusive of lunch.

In order to facilitate the entrance of five-year-olds into the school setting, staggered scheduling is permitted for two or three days at the beginning of the school year. This plan allows ten to fifteen children to come to school for an hour and leave, followed by another ten to fifteen children during the second hour. This schedule could be followed for two days; then, on the third day, all children could come for an hour, or an hour and a half. Other schedules might be:

		AM	PM
First Day	10 children	8:30	12:30
	10 children	9:30	1:30
	10 children	10:30	2:30
Second Day	10 children	8:30	12:30
	10 children	9:30	1:30
	10 children	10:30	2:30
Third Day	30 children	8:30-10:00	12:30-2:00
	OR		
First Day	10-15 children	8:30-10:00	12:30-2:00
	10-15 children	10:00-11:30	2:00-3:30
Second Day	10-15 children	8:30-10:00	12:30-2:00
	10-15 children	10:00-11:30	2:00-3:30
Third Day	20-30 children	8:30-10:00	12:30-2:00

Whatever plan is followed would depend on the school situation. Staggered scheduling is recommended in order to provide time for children to be introduced to people and routines within a time span that allows them to adjust gradually.

All units should operate the required number of school days. However, a double-session unit cannot always operate for the 180 days because of abbreviated daily scheduling, which is permissible for up to six days during the year, according the State Board policy. The local school district has the option of serving only one of the double-session classes each day when a short schedule is followed. Specific plans should be developed locally that will allow for a balance of actual learning experience time where units are operating on a double session.

Staff

The staff consists of a professional teacher and an aide. The teacher must be certified in early childhood or must be working toward proper certification and be able to qualify for a State Department of Education issued out-of-field permit. The teacher aide should have at least a high school diploma and preferably some training or experience in working with young children.

The State Department of Education early childhood education consultants offer pre-service training for all newly assigned kindergarten teachers and aides. Information concerning specific details for these workshops is available in July preceding the beginning of the school year.

Presently, the school year for teachers is 185 days. The school provides five days of in-service for all teachers, as required by the State Department of Education. It is highly recommended that, during these five days, considerable emphasis be placed on the kindergarten program. If your school

district has few kindergarten units, an alternative is to consider working with another district to provide these essential in-service components.

Transportation

The transportation plan for each school plant housing a kindergarten class should be designed according to the particular needs of the community served. In some instances, no public transportation may be necessary. The five-year-olds may be within walking distance of the school, or transportation may be provided by the parents.

Double sessions for kindergarten pupils will require transportation for some children in the middle of the normal school day. The beginning of the morning session and the ending of the afternoon session should coincide with the regular time of arrival and departure of school buses which transport other children to and from school. In planning bus routes, consideration should be given to reserving adequate space for transporting five-year olds so that specified maximum load will not be exceeded. Mid-day transportation will require a minimum number of buses for the transporation of five-year-olds. (It is important here to remember that kindergarten teachers have at least forty-five minutes break between sessions for planning and room preparation; transportation scheduling should not overlap or conflict with this time period.)

Every possible effort should be made to minimize the distance traveled by the five-year-olds without the assistance of older children. For the mid-day shuttle run, mature drivers who relate well to young children are needed.

The plan for transporting kindergarten children must follow the same rules and regulations for all other pupils.

a. State law forbids transportation of any school-age children living within one and one-half miles of the school.

b. Regulations also forbid departing from the regular approved route for distances of less than one mile.

c. A minimum of ten children is required for a bus.

The funds for transporting kindergarten pupils are transferred at the state level to cover the expenses for each child actually transported by a school bus. Funds and financial accounting will be administered through the regular transportation system. Plans for transportation must be approved by the district transportation supervisor in the same manner as other transportation.

Enrollment

Children to be enrolled in kindergarten must be five years old on or before November 1 of the current school year. Legal birth certificates and certificates of immunization are required upon registration.

The size of the double-session unit cannot be less than forty nor more than sixty pupils. Each class (or single session) shall be limited to not less than twenty and no more than thirty pupils. A special report must be submitted to the School Services Section by November 15 if any unit fails to meet the minimum enrollment required. Membership is determined by the total number of full-time students. Kindergarten students scheduled for half-day sessions are counted at .5 in computing membership.

Evaluation

Districts are not required to submit test results to the State Department of Education. However, it is highly recommended that each school develop an evaluation plan for its kindergarten program. For help in selecting an appropriate instrument, please notify the early childhood education consultants.

This little girl is sick and she went to find our principal
so he could show the little girl where the sick room was.

Communicating With Parents

Specific ways to develop effective communications with parents are presented in the guidebook, *Early Childhood Education in South Carolina* (pp. 11-16). There are many incidental ways of communicating with parents. However, it is most important that the school establish a concrete plan for giving and getting information to parents. The DMP states that "each school shall have an appropriate means of reporting to parents." For five-year-olds, this is **not** a report card. Because the purpose of reporting to parents is to let them know what their child is doing, the most effective way to communicate is face-to-face. Teachers should schedule two conferences a year as a means of reporting. The second conference should be scheduled in early spring, at least before the end of April or during May. This timing allows for the teacher and parent to meet again if the opportunity and/or need arises.

Food Services

Concrete experiences with food and food preparation are important to the development of positive attitudes toward nutrition, and should be a part of the total early childhood curriculum. Therefore, it is vital that children have nourishing foods served to them at school.

For a full day (single session), lunch, and sometimes breakfast, and mid-morning or afternoon snacks are provided for children depending on their needs. Because of the limited time (2½ hours) in a double-session program, it is recommended that a nutritious snack be provided for children in each session. This snack can be made easily available to children in the cooking center. Please refer to *Early Childhood Education in South Carolina* (pp. 41-50).

Library Resources

The kindergarten unit needs to build a strong classroom library for children and staff. The classroom collection may include such materials as literature anthologies, Mother Goose, music books, reference materials, and other resource books. Caldecott Award books, other standard favorites, and audiovisual software need to be included in the children's collection. Taking into consideration the special needs and interests of the children, teachers will find the bibliography, "List of Sources of Selection: Library Materials for South Carolina Elementary and Secondary Media Centers," helpful in locating print and non-print materials for kindergarten children. This publication and many of the selection aids listed there will be found in the school's media center. The kindergarten teacher can draw from these resources as well as from the materials in the school library media collection in preparing daily plans.

The principal must ensure that the kindergarten is an important part of the school and, in his administrative role, shares in the priviledge of using library media resources. It is the responsibility of the media staff to provide an appropriate collection of materials for the children and to provide services to these children. A regular library time should be scheduled for planned activities; in addition, children should be encouraged to visit the media center more informally at other times and to check out materials for home use.

The atmosphere and the environment in the media center should be conducive to usage by small children. The story-telling corner can be made attractive with pictures, stuffed animals, stacking child-size furniture, pillows, carpet squares, or whistle seats.

Housing primary materials in cubbyhole shelving would make usage easier for young children. One large round table would permit listening activities by small groups. The learning center concept lends itself well to the kindergarten program within the media center. This process is a natural extension of classroom activities.

When the kindergarten teacher, librarian, and principal work together as a team, the program quality can be increased.

Library skills which may be taught include: how to behave in a library media center; how to care for books; how to look up information; how to check out and return materials; how to use a filmstrip previewer; and how to listen to a record or to a tape. A picture card catalog could be used by these children.

Remember:

1. Planning activities
2. Selection of materials
3. Evaluation program

The responsibility for a successful kindergarten media program should be shared among the principal, teacher, media specialist, and child.

What is the principal's responsibility to program development?

The principal's responsibility to the development of the kindergarten program involves the many aspects discussed to this point. It involves realizing that some regulations are flexible and that a large measure of common sense is necessary when applying rules and regulations to people. The objective is to serve children in the best possible way.

Sometimes it is necessary to improvise housing for kindergarten programs, or to rent suitable space from other nearby facilities. It is also the principal's responsibility to attend to such physical plant needs as sinks, cabinets, outdoor equipment and materials, or transportation, and scheduling. The principal's role involves knowing and understanding the needs of the kindergarten program, valuing its uniqueness, and interpreting this knowledge to the community-at-large.

I like to go to the coloring center.
This is Shane and me.

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